NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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NICK CARTER AT THE TRACK

OR

HOW HE BECAME A DEAD GAME SPORT

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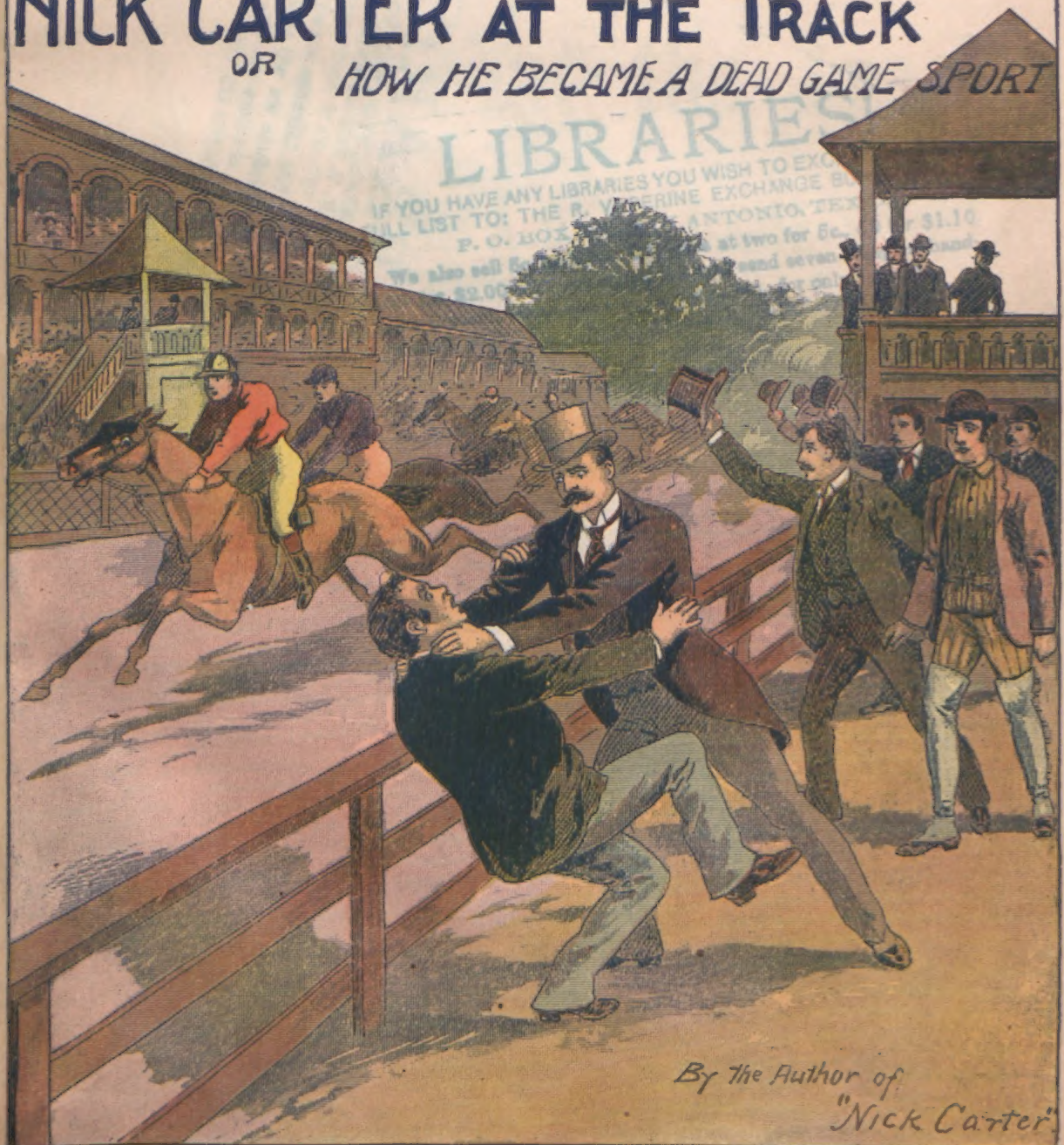
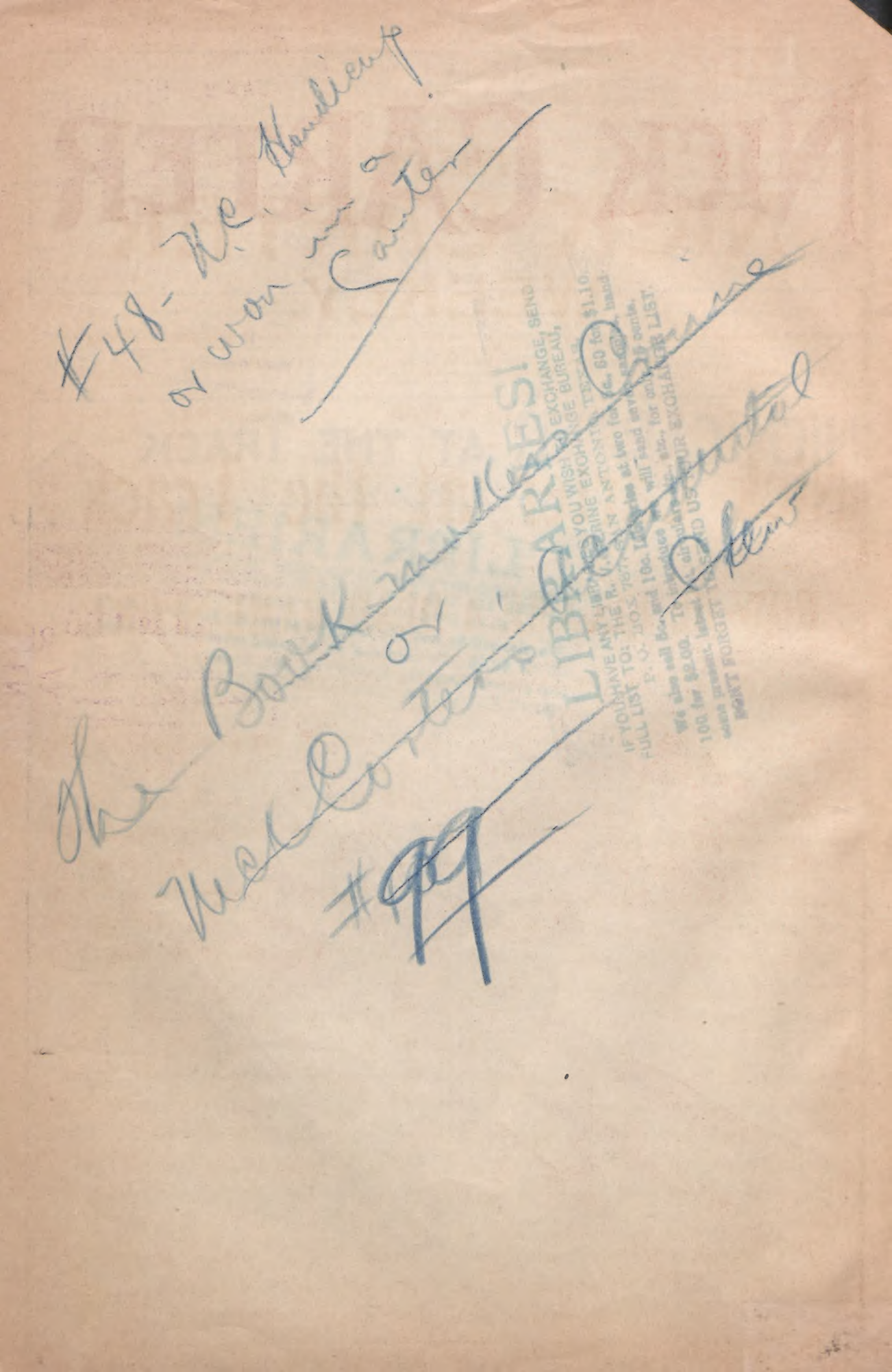


By the Author of "Nick Carter"

NICK SAW MARTIN SEIZE HIS HIRELING BY THE THROAT JUST AS THE HORSES THUNDERED PAST.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CHAPTER I.

DENVER BAY.

"And so, you see, I stand to lose twenty thousand dollars."

"That's a large sum."

"Yes, Mr. Carter, it's a large sum; but a middle-aged gentleman like yourself ought to be aware that risks are sometimes forced upon people who handle money in large sums."

The celebrated detective smiled as he looked into the excited countenance of the Wall Street man before him.

Half an hour before, if the broker had seen him at all, he would hardly have referred to him as "a middle-aged business man."

The detective had just returned from an expedition to the upper part of the city, during which he had appeared as a verdant country boy of an inquiring turn of mind.

"Of course," the detective said, slowly, "people who handle money for the profit of others are expected to keep it in motion—honestly in motion."

He glanced keenly into his visitor's face as he emphasized the last three words.

"My case is hardly what you suppose it to be," said Mr. James Wheeler, broker. "The money I handle belongs to two heirs—both minors. With that, however, you have nothing to do."

"You're mistaken," said Nick Carter, coldly. "If I am to handle your case I must have your fullest confidence."

"Regarding my present venture, certainly, but I fail to see how past complications can interest you."

"I have always made it a point," said the detective, rising to his feet, "not to engage in any case which is not entirely square and above-board. You come here with a statement that you have risked twenty thousand dollars belonging to two innocent children in the next Brooklyn Handicap, an illegal proceeding, and if you have done this for your own personal gain you have taken the first step toward a crime, and in that case I refuse to have anything to do with the matter."

"Do you remember," said Wheeler, putting out a hand to restrain the detective, who seemed about to leave the room, "about the recent daylight robbery in Wall Street, which resulted in the loss of twenty thousand dollars in cash?"

"Now you talk like a man of sense," said the detective, resuming his seat and drawing a note-book from his pocket.

"Three weeks ago yesterday," he continued, referring to the book, "the office of Mr. James Wheeler, broker, was entered during the noon hour by two men who claimed to be Texans seeking an investment. The broker was absent, and his clerks were careless.

"Result, when the Texans left, the broker was short exactly twenty thousand dollars. Have I stated the case correctly?"

The Wall Street man, sitting with his hands on his knees, stared in the detective's face with a look of surprise mingled with consternation.

"Great God!" he exclaimed at length. "The matter wasn't even reported to the police."

"Very true. Perhaps you will have the kindness to tell me the reason why."

"It would have ruined me. My creditors, and especially the friends of these heirs, would have pounced down upon me in less than twenty-four hours."

"And so, instead of facing the matter like a man, you endeavor to play even by staking money on the next handicap?"

"That's it exactly, and I pledge you my word of honor that in doing so I only sought to restore to the children the money of which they have been robbed."

"And now they are likely to lose forty thousand instead of twenty."

"I'm afraid so."

"What reason had you for supposing when you staked the money that Denver Bay would win the race?"

"To tell the truth, I was half crazy when I made the investment. In doing so I only followed the drift of public opinion regarding the horse."

"Did you make the bet in the regular pool-room way?"

"Certainly not. The odds were two to one on Denver Bay, and no bookmaker would have taken such chances so long before the race. The bet was made with a down-town sporting man, for whom I frequently do business in a small way."

"His name?"

"Peter Johnson."

"One of the most notorious race-track sharpers in the country."

"I was not aware of that at the time."

"Well," said Nick, with a smile, "I never knew a horse to win a race with such an outside bet on him, and all in the hands of one man, and that man a professional trickster."

"I can see now how foolish it was, and I wish to place the matter entirely in

your hands. I am certain that the horse is to be fixed in some way so that he cannot win."

"What makes you think that?"

"I have no definite information on the subject, it is true. As we say on the street, 'It is in the air.' No sporting man will touch the brute now, and those supposed to be on the inside are warning their friends not to risk their money on him."

"It does look pretty black."

"It looks pretty black, but I have every confidence in your ability to run the rumors down, and either see that there is a fair race or that the horse does not start at all."

"It's a risky business, and will cost considerable money."

"I expect that; will you take the case?"

"I will take it on one condition."

"Name it."

"It is this: If you recover this money you will take the whole amount belonging to these heirs and invest it in some place where it will be beyond the reach of New York thieves and race-track sharpers."

"You have my word on that. That is exactly the course I had decided upon."

"Then there's one other condition."

"If it is not more difficult than the other I accede to it in advance."

"That is, that if we discover crookedness on the part of these horsemen, you are not to drop the matter as soon as you are made whole. You are to stand up to the rack and help me to have justice done to them."

"I will do that willingly."

"It may cause you some trouble in your brokerage business."

"That doesn't matter."

"That is all at present, then. You may see me at your office to-morrow. If a man calls and asks to see you in regard to Lackawana admit him to your private room at once. You may not recognize me, but you can trust the man that mentions that word."

After the departure of the broker the detective busied himself for some moments in the examination of a list of the many pool-rooms in the lower part of the city.

"It's a tough job," he thought, "but it will give me a chance to see the inside of some of these dens again."

He stepped into an inner room, and in a few minutes returned in the guise of a cattle drover from the far West.

When he left his office shortly afterward he took the direction of Barclay Street, and soon entered one of the disreputable pool-rooms in the vicinity of that thoroughfare.

The place he entered was in a basement, and was foul, musty, and suffocating.

The place was crowded with men and boys of high and low degree, all half crazed with the gambling spirit.

The time was early in the afternoon.

From his position behind a large desk a tough-looking clerk was drawling out the names of horses with the odds which the proprietor of the place would bet against them.

It is generally supposed by the public that these poolrooms merely conduct a commission business, and that the odds

offered there are the ones posted at the race track.

But this is by no means the case. The proprietors of the places bet according to their private ideas of the proper odds.

The rustling of greenbacks and the clinking of gold and silver were heard throughout the place as the detective entered.

"The race in which Denver Bay is entered takes place the day after to-morrow," mused the detective, "and I'll just see how he stands in this locality."

"Say, podner," he said, advancing toward a heavily-built man behind the railing, whom he knew to be the proprietor, "what odds d'ye give on Denver Bay?"

"Guess you're from the West," was the answer.

"Right from the West, and any time you want to know about the price o' cattle just drop a line to Sol White to the Denver post-office."

"Denver Bay's from the West, too, isn't he?"

"You bet he is, and he's a good little hoss. What odds will you give me on him?"

"The Bay don't count much of a figure on my books. The race ain't on yet, you know, and you can't tell yet what horses will start. But I'll make a bet of two to one."

"You can't do business with me at that figger," said Nick, turning away.

"Hold on!" said the sharper, pretending to look over the leaves of a note-book in his hand. "I'll give you five to one if you want to back your favorite."

"Ten to one would be nearer right."

"You can't have much confidence in your horse."

"'Tain't my horse. I thought I'd drop fifty or a hundred just for luck."

"A thousand to a hundred is a pretty wild bet."

"You don't have ter make it. Tell you what I'll do. If you'll make it fifteen to one I'll go you a hundred."

Nick Carter watched the face of the bookmaker as he made this proposition, and saw at once that he was pleased to get a bet even at such odds.

"All right," said the bookmaker. "Put up your dust. Here's your ticket."

"If the horse don't start, now," said Nick, counting out the money, "I get this back, I suppose."

"That'll be all right," said the other, in a non-committal sort of way.

"When I sell my cattle," said Nick, resolved to learn still more regarding the pool-room idea of the horse, "I may want to bet some more."

"I'll take all the bets you want to make at that rate."

"Will they let me see the horse?"

"You'll have to settle that with the trainer."

"Where is he?"

"In one of the stables near the track, I suppose."

"Well, I guess I'll go over to-morrow and see him. I'll bet the hoss'll know me like a book. Why, podner, I've rode behind him many a time."

"W'at's dat ye're givin' us?" asked one of the plug-uglies who infest that part of the city, crowding up against the detective.

In paying over the money Nick had

purposely exhibited a large roll of bills. He was positive that such a course would attract the attention of some of the sharpers about the place and would lead to some sort of conversation.

"I was jest a-sayin'," he said, turning to the bully with a benevolent look, "that I've rode behind Denver Bay many a time."

"Good little horse," said the other, "but I think I can give yer a pointer or two on him."

"Don't give it away here," said Nick, in a whisper.

"I don't give nuthin' away. I gets money fer pointers—I does."

As he spoke he took the detective by the arm and led him to the meanly furnished barroom in the rear of the place.

"I'll jest tell you," he said, as they stood at the bar with liberal glasses of whisky before them, "that yer want ter play dat hoss fer second place."

"I've been playin' him fer winner."

"Well, you jest take my tip, an' go ahead on it. It's all right."

The detective paid for the drinks, and turned away, but the other caught him fiercely by the arm.

"Hold on here!" he said, with an ugly look. "That tip'll cost you just ten dollars."

"I didn't ask you for no tip," said the assumed countryman, with a stare.

"Well, you got it just the same, an' you'll get somethin' else, too, if you don't cash up."

"You won't get no ten dollars from me."

The bully struck viciously at the detective, who dodged away from him in a clumsy sort of way.

Nick was perfectly aware that the man meant business, and had no idea of coming to close quarters with him.

He well knew that a clinch of any kind would be likely to disarrange his disguise and thus expose his true identity.

With an oath the bully advanced again and struck a savage blow at the detective's face.

Nick simply dodged his head this time, and striking before the other could resume his guard, laid his opponent senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE CIRCUS.

The knockdown created very little excitement in the room.

Reports from the races were coming in every few minutes, and nearly ever one there had more or less money at stake.

A few collected about the fallen man, however, and Nick had no difficulty in slipping quietly out of the way.

He had no idea, however, of leaving the place.

His bet had started a little ripple of talk regarding Denver Bay, and he knew that by remaining he might hear something to his advantage.

At the end of the basement farthest from the street were a number of stalls used by sporting men and others for private consultation.

As the crowd was now congregated around the main desk in front many of these stalls were empty.

Nick stepped noiselessly into one of them, and closed the door.

A moment later any one glancing into the stall would have seen a half intoxicated countryman sitting with his chair tipped back against the wall, his hat pulled down over an inflamed face, and his feet resting upon the table.

Not a single trace of the well-to-do cattle drover remained.

"I may have to stay here a long time," he thought, "and may as well have some cigars. Besides a whisky glass properly placed on the table can do no harm."

The order was given and promptly filled.

The waiter by no means suspected that his seemingly inebriated customer was the person in quest of whom the now infuriated bully was roaring about.

Before leaving home Nick had left a note addressed to Chick, instructing him to call at the pace toward which he was drecting his steps, and he now awaited with some impatience the arrival of his assistant.

The afternoon passed slowly away.

The races were over, and the stalls were filling up.

In some of them people were dividing and spending the money won during the day, while in others angry losers were laying plans by which they might account for their sudden lack of funds.

After a time two men, evidently none too sober; entered the stall next to the one occupied by the detective, and ordered more drinks.

"It's a bloomin' shame for a feller ter drop his wad like that," said one, in a maudlin tone, "specially when he's on de inside an' oughter know. But you lost more'n I did, an' I sympathize with you."

"I don't want none o' your sympathy," said the other, evidently a little nearer sober than his companion; "I'm broke now, but I can get plenty of money when I get over to the stable."

"You're a liar! you're always workin' that bluff about the stable. You don't get any more stuff'n I do. Wot you got to do wid de stable, say?"

"W'at I got to do wid de stable?" said the other, in as sarcastic a tone as he could command. "I'm chambermaid for Denver Bay, I am."

"You're a nice man to be around a racing stable," said the other, with an oath. "W'at do you know about a hoss?"

"You're a sucker," said the other. "You wait till the Denver Bay runs, and I'll show you a wad."

"You won't get it on Denver Bay. You're drunk, that's what's the matter with you. Doncher talk to me no more. You're drunk."

"You're drunk yourself. You smell like a sour apple. Stan' up like a man. Why doncher pack yer whisky like me?"

The last drinks had evidently been too much for the men, for Nick heard a fall as the speaker attempted to stand on his feet to show how sober he was.

Nick stood upon a chair and carefully raised his head above the narrow partition between the two stalls.

In his fall the one had carried the other down with him, and they were now clawing, chewing and punching one another in a drunken way.

In a moment they lay still, and after mumbling a curse or two fell asleep.

"I'm in for it now," thought the detective, again seating himself in a position so that the men could not leave their stall without being seen by him. "I must stay here all night if necessary in order to cultivate the acquaintance of that fellow who acts as 'chambermaid' for Denver Bay."

Just at that moment the door of his stall was opened, and a greasy looking jockey shoved his face inside.

"You don't mean ter say you're goin' ter smoke them cigars?" he said, taking one from the table, and breaking it in order to inspect its contents.

"Hardly. How long have you been here?"

"Oh, just about long enough to nose around in search of a certain green countryman," said Chick, sitting down in a chair.

"Isn't that a bold costume for this place?"

"Bold, why?"

"These people may want to know what stable you belong to."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm from the South, and I never rode a horse with a record."

"That'll do first rate. Just skip around in there, and see what you can find out about Denver Bay; but before you go take a look at the men in the next stall. We may have further business with them."

Chick opened the door and looked in.

"Purty drunk, I should say."

"Yes, and I've got to wait around here until they get sober enough to make friends with. One of them works at a stable I want to know something about."

Chick now left the stall and hung about the place engaging in conversation with any one who would talk with him.

In a half hour he was back with his report.

"There's some scheme afloat in regard to Denver Bay," he said. "They're having great sport over an old sucker who came in here this afternoon and put up a hundred on him at fifteen to one."

"Yes, I'm the sucker. Well, find out all you can. Don't go far away."

After a time Nick heard faint sounds in the adjoining stalls as though the drunken men were regaining consciousness.

As he peered cautiously over the partition one of them raised himself on his elbow, eyed his companion curiously for a moment, and then asked, in a sarcastic tone:

"W'ats de matter wid you? Had a death in de family? Or did yer gal run off wid de coachman?

"Oh, you've never been broke before. Well, you'd better keep quiet an' let 'spectable people sleep, or I'll put a charge of 'sturbin' de peace on you. See? Hello, pardner," he continued, as some one opened the door and walked in, "why don't yer send in yer card?"

"You're a couple of nice blokes!" said the new comer. "I was afraid when you came over town that you'd get drunk. I'll have you both run in if you don't look out."

"Run in nothin'. Dey can't convict a man but once fer an offense, an' I was put in jail thirty years ago for this same drunk. I'll swear I haven't been sober since. Just de same drunk all de time."

"How long has Amos been here?"

"All the afternoon."

"Has he done any talking?"

"Naw. His tongue's as thick as a Congressman's head."

"Well, you go out somewhere and get some supper. I want to talk with him."

As the fellow slouched out, very much improved by his brief nap, the newcomer seized the man on the floor by the shoulder and shook him roughly.

"Wake up, here!" he shouted, in a shrill voice, in his ear.

Amos opened his eyes, and finally raised himself into a chair.

"What have you been saying this afternoon?" asked the other, sharply.

"Nothin'."

"Did you tell that drunken brute, Hazelton, anything?"

"Not a thing, s'elp me!"

The man passed out of the stall and inspected the rooms on each side.

He found one stall empty, and in the other there was only a drunken countryman sleeping with his feet on the table and his chair tipped back against the wall.

"Now, then," he said, sitting down again, "are you sober enough to understand what I say?"

"I'm all right now," said Amos, who really appeared to be in fair shape. "Talk away, Martin."

Martin talked in a low tone, which, however, was loud enough to be understood by the deetctive.

"It's all fixed. The horse is to be let alone and remain in good shape until the last moment. He is to be fixed after he is brought upon the track."

"I don't see how I'm going to do that."

"It's easy enough. The dose isn't larger than a marble, and it's rolled up in sugar, so he'll take it fast enough. You can put it in his mouth just as you let go of the bridle at the start."

"Is the owner posted?"

"Hardly," said the other, with an oath. "The fool expects the horse to win the race."

"Does he suspect anything?"

"No; he's heard the talk, of course, but he thinks it a trick of the pool rooms to keep his horse back."

"How are de jockeys?"

"Why," said the other, with another oath, "what do you suppose I got you in that stable for? If the owner had been in with the game, or if there'd been a jockey I could have depended on, I shouldn't have needed you."

"Well, I don't like it a little bit. What effect will it have on de hoss?"

"It'll just set him crazy for a minute or two, and he'll bolt and kick and buck around just enough to lose the race.

"He probably will be all right in five minutes.

"You understand about keeping him away from the judges' stand as long as possible, of course?"

"I ain't goin' ter ride him," said the other, sullenly. "I only hope the boy that does won't get his neck broken."

"Oh, the boy'll be all right. You just rush down the track when you see the break made, and fool around after the boy stops him until he has a little chance to get over the dose, so the judge won't suspect anything. You understand now?"

"Yes," said the other; "I understand. I wish I hadn't had anything to do with it. Have you got any money? I'm broke."

"You won't drink any more to-night?"

"Not a drop."

"Well, here's twenty-five dollars. I may not see you again till just before the race comes off."

"I believe," said Amos, as he took the money, "that Denver Bay would win that race if you'd let him alone."

"In that case it would cost my man just forty thousand dollars."

As Martin passed out of the stall the door was left open for an instant, and Amos stood directly in front of it with the greenbacks still in his hands.

Neither he nor Martin observed the greedy look which two shabby-looking fellows who were passing at the time cast upon the money.

But Nick Carter, from his position, took it all in.

"I'm in great luck again," he thought. "If those two loafers are the kind of fellows I think they are I'll have a chance to help that man out of a scrape before long."

The next moment the two men advanced to the door of the stall occupied by Amos, and stepped inside.

It was now after dark, and the part of the room in which the stalls were situated was but dimly lighted.

There was still excitement enough around the cashier's desk to attract the attention of those who still lingered in the place.

So there was really very little risk in what the two men evidently intended doing.

As they advanced Nick leaped to the top of his table, but remained in such a position that no part of his body could be seen from the other side.

"Hello, pard," said one of them, putting his hand familiarly upon Amos' shoulder, "you've been lucky enough to-day to buy the drinks."

"Yes, an' hurry up!" added the other. "I'm mighty dry!"

"I lost every dollar I put up."

"You're lucky then to have such a fly-lookin' chap hand you a roll like that."

Amos sprang back and drew up his fist.

"If you come a step nearer I'll knock you down first," he said, "and then I'll call the police."

Both men drew billies and advanced toward him.

Just then a most unexpected thing occurred.

Nick Carter leaped lightly over the partition, landed upon the table between the combatants, and at once settled one of the ruffians by a well-directed kick under the chin.

The other, too astonished for a moment to make any movement of defense, was piled on top of his companion by a fist blow under his ear.

"Now, then," said Nick, addressing the astonished horseman, "those fellows won't lay long in that way, and we'd better get out o' here mighty quick!"

CHAPTER III.

A LARGE BET.

The detective and Amos passed out of the stall and out of the place, leaving the two ruffians lying unconscious upon the floor.

As they reached the street Amos pointed with his finger toward the place they had just left.

"There'll be a big racket down there," he said.

"We won't be in it," was the reply. "Those fellows are two of the toughest thieves in the city."

"You know them, then?"

"They were pointed out to me one day."

"Well, I don't think they'll want to be pointed out to you again. You did some of the quickest work there I ever saw."

"'Quick' work was necessary about that time."

"You did me a good turn anyway. If I ever get a chance I'll do as much for you."

"You ain't liable to get a chance. I'm going away in a few days."

"You don't live here, then?"

"I'm a farmer."

"Where are you stopping?"

"Most anywhere."

"Why not come over and stay with me to-night?"

"Don't mind if I do."

Nick was more than pleased at his good fortune in getting within reach of the tricky sporting men's tool so soon.

He suspected, however, that the man he was with would be followed by his scheming employers from that time until the race was over.

He was fully aware that men who commit crimes and engage others to assist them in their nefarious work never trust their tools implicitly.

His first idea was to ascertain whether spies had actually been set upon his companion.

He also desired to know whether Chick was in a position to be within reach if needed.

In order to do all this it was necessary for him to leave Amos alone for at least a few moments.

"Look here," he said, as they were starting up the street, "I'm a little anxious about those men down there. I'd like to know whether they are hurt much."

"Well, we'll go back if you like."

"No, you step into this saloon, and I'll go back alone. They know you there, but they don't know me."

Amos did as requested, and Nick started rapidly down the street.

In a moment he ran across Chick.

"I was looking for you," said Nick, shortly.

"Here I am."

"Did you see me leave the place with that man?"

"Sure; and it was a heap of fun to see the proprietor and the waiters wondering over the two men you left in the stall."

"Are they badly hurt?"

"No, you can't kill people of that stamp. One's got a black eye and the other a lame neck."

"Did any one shadow us out?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"The man who was in the stall before the two bums went in."

"How is he dressed?"

"The same as before, only that he now has a light overcoat over his cutaway, and wears a slouch hat instead of the silk tile."

"It's just as I expected," mused Nick. "The fellow is working for a man who has a good deal of money at stake, and he'll never leave my man until he has him safe in bed.

"Well, keep into that saloon," he finally said to Chick, pointing out the place where he had left Amos, "and see if you can find our man Martin in there."

"You mean the man with the light overcoat and sketch hat?"

"Certainly. If he is in there, find out what he is doing. If he's with Amos, get back here as quick as possible."

"You want to keep those two fellows apart to-night?"

"Yes."

The young fellow hastened into the place, only to dart out again the next moment.

"He's in there giving Amos the razzle-dazzle."

"What is he saying?"

"Why, Amos wants to get away from him, and he swears he means to stay with him until after some race or other."

This was a puzzle.

Nick had made every calculation upon going to the stables with the fellow whom he had selected. He wanted to know the place where Denver Bay was in training.

He had not yet decided upon what course to pursue after reaching the field of action, but was positive that once on the ground some means could be found by which the plotters could be circumvented.

By this time the detective had made up his mind to give the tricky sporting men a very hard deal. He was firmly of the opinion that Denver Bay would be the best horse in the race.

He believed that word had been passed around the inner circle of gamblers and betting men that the Western horse would not be permitted to win, and he reasoned that they would lay almost any odds against the horse.

He thought that the best way to punish them would be to meet them on their own ground, and win their money.

Nick Carter is by no means a gamester or betting man.

He derives an immense income from his detective work, and has no inclination to make a break for sudden fortune.

In fact, were he worth as many millions as a Vanderbilt or a Gould he would still, for the very love of the business, be a detective.

"Well," said Nick, at length, "if I do the work I have laid out for myself to-night we must separate those two men."

"But how?"

"Well, I have a report to make to the fellow, and I'll go in and call him aside. If he wants to get away from that crowd I won't have any trouble arranging it."

"But if he doesn't?"

"Then one of us'll have to go over to the stables on his own hook."

"Do you know where they are?"

"Oh, they're out there by the track somewhere."

Nick walked boldly into the saloon, and called Amos aside.

Martin did not allow the two men to get very far away from him, and he watched them as closely as a cat would a mouse every moment they were talking together.

"Those two men are in our shape," Nick said.

"Well, you did the hitting, I think."

"That won't make any difference. We'd both have to stand trial if we should get caught."

"Oh, come off! Nothing can be done to a man for knocking out a highway robber."

"Ah!" thought Nick, "he has been getting some advice from my friend Martin."

"Look here," said Martin, advancing to where the two men were standing, and addressing Nick, "this man and I have an engagement to-night, and we don't intend to have any outsiders forced upon us. If you have transacted your business with him you'd better walk away."

"That's right," said Amos, now com-

pletely under the control of the master mind; "you did me a good turn in there, and I'm much obliged to you, but I've got business with this man just now."

Nick regarded both men with a countrified stare for a moment, and then walked away.

"It's a good thing," he thought, "that I tumbled to the racket before we got started for the stables. The man would certainly have suspected something.

"Now, then," he said to Chick, as the two again stood together, "you follow these men over and locate the horse. You may report to me at the house at eight o'clock in the morning."

As Chick placed himself in a position to watch every movement of the men he was shadowing, Nick stepped into a restaurant and ordered a liberal meal. This concluded, he walked into a saloon next door and sat down in a private stall.

Five minutes later a respectable-looking, middle-aged business man walked out of the stall and took his way toward one of the most popular gambling dens in that portion of the city.

The place was crowded, and faro, roulette, and stud-poker tables were running full blast.

As Nick supposed it would be, the talk was all about the race.

He bought a stack of white chips, and sat down at the end of a faro table, playing very slowly and listening to every word that was said around him.

"Well, old sport," said the dealer, familiarly, to a well-dressed gentleman who entered and bought a stack of yellows, "you must have struck luck to-day. Any news?"

"No," said the person addressed, with a laugh, "nothing except that a fellow bought Denver Bay for a hundred at fifteen to one."

"That ain't so bad," said a player at the opposite end of the table. "The horse may win."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said the man behind the yellow chips, "I'll go you twenty to one that the horse don't get a show."

The man subsided, and Nick shoved a fifty-dollar bill toward the speaker.

"I'll take that bet," he said, coolly.

"All right," said the player, taking out a roll of bills. "Here's the money. Who'll hold the stakes?"

Nick called up one of the proprietors, stated the bet, and put the money into his hand.

"Now, then," said the other, with a sneer, "I'm not used to betting against such odds, but I'll put up ten thousand against a thousand that Denver Bay don't win."

"I'm your huckleberry," said Nick, producing the money.

"Of course I haven't the money with me, but I'll put up a forfeit of a thousand against a hundred of yours, and we'll make the bet at ten o'clock in the morning."

"That's satisfactory," said Nick, handing the money to the stake-holder.

With this the two men parted, and Nick sat down in a corner, and was soon apparently deeply interested in a newspaper.

The man with whom he had made the bets returned to the faro table, and in a few moments cashed in his chips.

"That's the first move," thought the detective. "The fellow's next move will be to find out if there's anything wrong about the scheme they have put up on Denver Bay."

Nick had made these two bets not so much for the purpose of winning the money, but because he believed that a bluff of that sort would send the sporting man back to the headquarters of the crooked crowd to see if there had been any change in the programme.

After cashing in his chips the man lit

a cigar, and turned hastily toward the door.

Nick at once started along after him.

"You won't forget about that bet in the morning," he said.

"I should say not. I haven't got any thousand dollars to throw away that way."

"Well," said Nick, as the other passed down the stairs, "I'll light a cigar and go home."

Instead of immediately passing into the street with the man Nick stood in the entrance a moment, so as to give the man no indication of being followed, and then hastened away after him.

The fellow turned into a stairway on William Street which, as Nick was well aware, led to another gambling room.

The stairway was dark and deserted as the detective reached it.

In a very few moments the green countryman who had struck such effective blows in the pool room stepped into the lighted hall above, and tapped cautiously at the door.

"Any game goin' on?" he said, as the wicket in the door was opened and a black face peered out upon him.

The door was softly opened, and Nick stepped into a small, half-lighted hallway.

"Guess you nebber bin heah befo', boss," said the negro, with a grin.

"No," said Nick, "I'm from Grand Rapids, Michigan. I thought I'd like to look around."

"Well, you go right in dat door," said the darky, pointing to one at the end of the hall.

Nick had been in the place many times, and he knew it to be one of the toughest gambling houses in town.

In fact, it was just the sort of place for crooked work of all kinds to be planned.

The apartment into which he had been shown was but a small part of the den.

The rooms in which the schemes were hatched, and where the gamblers spent their leisure hours, opened from the opposite end of the hall.

The detective's object now was to gain a position from which he could overhear what was going on there.

Seating himself in the outer room he called for glass after glass of whisky until he appeared to be in the last stage of intoxication.

Each time he paid the waiter from a large roll of bills.

"Here's a seat at the table if you want to play," said a man behind the roulette wheel.

"Guesh I'm too full t' pla; guesh I'll go to the hotel 'n go t' bed," said the man from Grand Rapids, Michigan.

"You'll get run in if you go out on the street now. You'd better go back there and lay down a while. Pompey!"

Nick could hardly restrain a chuckle as he was led away by the obliging darky.

"They don't let any one out of here with a roll of money like that," he thought.

He was shown into a small room containing a couch, a mirror, and a small table.

As the negro left the room the detective heard a key turned in the lock.

Nick lost no time in making a close examination of the apartment.

He had sized up the negro carefully, and in five minutes he was a pretty good counterfeit of that sable gentleman.

A sound of voices now came faintly from the direction opposite from the entrance to the room he was in.

It was very indistinct, however, and after a moment's inspection of the room beyond through the keyhole, the detective applied his pick-lock, and soon found himself in a small dark room from which he could hear the voices quite distinctly.

"I tell you it's all right," said a voice with an oath.

"Well, it's mighty strange that he's

should be picked up in two places in one day."

The voice was that of the man with whom the detective had made the bet.

"You're a suspicious chap, Brower," said the first voice. "Ever since you made that twenty-thousand dollar daylight haul down on Wall Street you think everybody in town is after your money."

"Well, I'll go and make the bet in the morning, then."

Nick, anxious to get a view of the man whose voice he did not recognize, stepped lightly on a table to look through the transom.

The table gave way beneath his weight, and fell to the floor with a crash.

In a moment the men in the room beyond were on their feet.

Nick sprang to the door through which he had entered the room, closed and locked it after him, and made a dash for the outer room.

At the door he was met by two employees of the place whose attention had been attracted by the noise of the fall.

"What's the matter, Pomp?" one of them asked, excitedly.

"That ain't Pomp," shouted the other, reaching for his pistol; "that's some spy."

Nick struck out hard and quick, and both men went down.

Before the men at the table could get upon their feet, or get where they could make any effort to stop him, the detective was at the outer door confronting the negro who had admitted him.

The darky sprang to the door as though to bar his exit.

The next moment he felt the cold muzzle of a revolver pressed against his temple, and sank trembling to the floor.

As Nick stepped out and bounded down the stairs a bullet struck the wall just above his head.

"I have to find myself for that error," he thought, as he hastened away from the stairway into the crowd.

"If I had kept on my countryman's uniform they would have regarded that break I made as the result of curiosity on the part of a country chump out to see the town, and I might have learned something more about that twenty-thousand-dollar daylight haul on Wall Street."

CHAPTER IV.

A HOWLING SWELL.

Promptly at eight o'clock next morning Chick made his appearance at Nick Carter's private office.

He had the appearance of a man who had had a hard night of it, but was still full of pluck.

"Did everthing go all right?" Nick asked.

"Yes, I was reasonably successful."

"Well, for my part, I don't think I scored any very brilliant success after we separated. After a good deal of hard work I struck just the place I wanted, and then a table broke down with me, and I got out of the joint just ahead of a bullet."

After receiving his assistant's report Nick dressed himself in the costume in which he had first met the Wall Street man, and took his way to that gentleman's office.

"Tell Mr. Wheeler," he said to the clerk in the outer office, "that I want to see him in regard to that Lackawanna deal."

"You're to be shown in at once," said the clerk, opening the door to the inner room.

The broker appeared to be awaiting the arrival of the detective, and was in anything but a calm frame of mind.

"You were right," the detective said, "in supposing that undue means would

be employed to prevent the horse winning the race."

"I've been hoping almost against hope that my suspicions were unfounded. I wish I had pocketed my former loss, and let this matter alone."

"There is still a chance to save yourself without taking any risk."

"What do you mean?"

"The horse can be kept out of the race."

Nick eyed the broker keenly as he made this suggestion.

"I've been thinking about that."

"It's easy enough done, and in that case you will recover your stakes."

"And still that leaves me just where I started in."

"Why didn't you think of that before taking the steps you did last night?"

"You're mistaken. I've done nothing at all in the matter since seeing you."

"You have not been at the stables since leaving my house yesterday afternoon?"

"I have not."

"You have authorized some one to go there?"

"I have not."

Nick reflected a moment before speaking.

"You could have no motive in deceiving me," he said, at length, "but it's very singular for all that."

"I don't understand you."

"It isn't necessary at the present time that you should."

"But I'm deeply interested in the matter, and——"

"Never mind that now. I am not here to be cross-questioned."

"But I infer from your remark that something unusual took place at the stables last night."

"Not that I am aware of."

"You talk in riddles."

"One of my men simply learned the true condition of affairs there, that's all."

"How it affect me?"

"Slightly."

"Then I ought to know."

"Not if you adhere to the resolution expressed yesterday afternoon, to let the horse go in the race."

"It isn't any use to try to pump you, I see," said the broker, with a smile. "You will have your own way."

"I usually do."

"You're lucky."

"Now to business," said Nick, taking a slip of paper from his pocket. "If you still desire the case to go on as originally mapped out you must go to this address at ten o'clock with nine hundred dollars in currency, and stake it on Denver Bay."

"But, my dear sir, I have too much money on Denver Bay now."

"Count this as part of the expenses of the case, then. I put up a hundred as a forfeit last night against a thousand."

"In other words, ten thousand dollars will be staked against a thousand."

"That's it."

"You have a great deal of confidence in the horse, and also in your ability to make the race a square one."

"I never copper my own bets."

The broker took the required amount of money from the safe and put it into his pocket.

"What sort of a place is it?"

"It's a gambling house, but you will be used respectfully, and any money staked there in the regular way is safe."

"Shall I find you here when I return?"

"No; I'm going a part of the way with you."

"Why not all the way?"

"I have reasons of my own for not doing so."

The two men passed out of the house together, and were soon in the vicinity of the gambling house.

The broker passed up the steps and Nick stood in a neighboring doorway carelessly smoking a cigar.

In a few moments the broker

peared, and was about to approach the spot where Nick stood when a quick motion informed him that he was to pass on without recognition.

"Did he make the bet?" Nick asked, seeming to address no one in particular.

The broker nodded and went on.

Before long the man with whom Nick had conversed the previous evening passed down the stairs, and took his way to a neighboring poolroom.

The detective followed until there was no doubt as to where the man was going, and then walked about the street for some moments in deep thought.

When he finally entered the poolroom the man stood at the desk talking with the proprietor.

"There is no doubt in my mind," Nick heard the latter say, "regarding the horse's ability to win. The only question is whether the boys will do their work well."

"You can't gamble on anybody's honesty when it comes to dollars and cents," was the reply. "The other side has the age now, and can afford to put up a lot of money to have things go their way."

"Well, you'll have to take your own chances."

"I suppose so."

"You're too old a sport to get bluffed into a bet of that size."

"Yes, I ought not to have done it."

"There may be some way out of it yet."

"I'll try and find some way," said the other, with a scowl as he turned away.

After leaving the place the sport, whom the proprietor addressed as Brower, took his way to a messenger office, sent a boy out with a note, and then hastened to a fashionable saloon in the neighborhood.

"Now, then," thought Nick, as he took a seat not far from him out of the range of his sight, "I'll soon find out how many different games they are playing over at the stables."

The sport settled himself down behind a paper as though he had some time to wait.

So Nick left him there, and passed out into the street, and ten minutes later, disguised as a howling swell, sauntered into the place, stared about through his one eye glass, and finally took a seat near the waiting man.

At the end of half an hour the sport became restless, and began walking nervously up and down the room.

Just then a rough-looking fellow entered, and in response to a signal seated himself at a table in the rear end of the place.

"Hello, Steve," said the sport, advancing to the table and taking a seat, "are the races going your way this season?"

"About the same old thing," was the careless response.

Both men glanced keenly about, and the next moment were engaged in earnest conversation.

Nick strolled around toward the back part of the room, stupidly gazing at the handsome paintings hung upon the walls.

But the men, evidently very suspicious, dropped their voices to whispers whenever he came near them.

"This won't do," thought Nick. "I must find out what those fellows are talking about."

Every effort to overhear them, however, failed, and he finally gave it up.

After a long talk, during which Nick saw some money pass from the sport to his companion, the former left the place.

"Well, Steve," said one of the helpers about the saloon, "have you got any pointers about the race to-morrow?"

"I can tell you about that to-morrow."

"Aw," said the dude, advancing toward the two men, "were you talking about the races, you know?"

"That's what," said Steve, winking at his companion. "Do you want to make your everylasting fortune?"

"Aw, I might put up a couple of hundred."

"That's the cheese," said Steve, with another wink. "I'll bet you're a dead-game sport."

"It isn't good form to be a sport, doncher know."

"You bet it ain't, but it's good form to win money, eh?"

Steve poked the dude slyly in the ribs as he spoke.

"All the boys bet, doncher know."

"Well, you follow my steer, and you'll have a wad as big as yer head day after to-morrow."

"But, my deah sir, I don't see any steah. How can I follah a steah if there is no steah?"

"You're a good un; you come wid me an' I'll show you de steer."

"Is it fah? I cawn't walk in these gaiters, doncher know."

"Just a little ways, pard."

"Then we must have a cawwiage. Waitah, will you call a cawwiage?"

Steve almost choked over the glass of whisky he was drinking as the carriage drove up and the dude started for the door.

Before entering the carriage he gave his instructions to the driver in a low tone of voice.

The carriage was driven around several blocks, and finally drew up at a low pool-room which was only a short distance from the starting place.

"Take a chair, Charlie," said Steve, as they entered, "and I'll find out what de boss has got ter say 'bout de races."

"I've got a sucker," he said to the clerk in a low tone. "W'at do I get if he bets a couple o' hundred?"

"What'll he bet on?"

"Oh, anything."

"Twenty per cent; is that enough?"

"'Tain't 'nuff, but I s'pose it's all I'll get."

"Suppose I put him on Denver Bay even?"

"Don't do that," said the other, hastily, "because if the horse shouldn't ——"

The fellow hesitated with some confusion in his manner.

"What's that?" demanded the pool-room man, sharply. "Are there any new tricks over that horse?"

"I don't know anythin' about any tricks."

"Well, if you don't no man in New York does."

"That's all right, but I didn't come here to talk about that. Let's get down to business."

Nick's sharp ear had taken in every word of the conversation, and he at once resolved to test the fellow's knowledge of Denver Bay's standing.

"Aw," he said, advancing toward the desk, "I see Denver Bay is on the board. I'll bet on him."

"I wouldn't do that," said Steve.

"Why not, me deah boy?"

"You came down here to take my steer, didn't you?"

"Aw, get away from de desk wid yer dude!"

A couple of bullies shoved themselves between Nick and the desk, and one of them took occasion to drop a quid of tobacco on one of his nicely polished shoes as he passed him.

"Look heah, fellah, no gentleman would do that, doncher know."

"Who ain't a gentleman?" demanded the bully, doubling up his fists.

"These people are weal coarse," said Nick, turning to Steve; "I shall leave the place."

By this time the clerk was endeavoring by shaking his head and other motions to induce the roughs to let his customer alone until the bet had been made, but

the fellows were half intoxicated, and were bent on having a crack at the dude.

"Take dat wid ye!" said one of them, aiming a blow at Nick's face.

Nick's guard was up in a moment, and a second later two astonished loafers were rolling over each other on the floor.

"I like that," said Steve, with a hearty laugh. "You're a brick, if you are a dude. If you'll drive me over to de track I'll show you de hosses. I've got a date over there about this time."

The toughs did not appear anxious to renew the contest, so Nick and his new friend left the place and were driven away.

CHAPTER V.

A JOCKEY IN TROUBLE.

The carriage containing the dude and the man Morris whom he had picked up at the saloon stopped at a roadhouse a short distance from the stables.

Nick was not yet posted regarding the conference at the saloon between Morris and the man Brower, who had summoned him there.

He was satisfied that some scheme was on foot which had nothing to do with the plot engineered by Johnson, who had staked forty thousand dollars against twenty thousand of James Wheeler's money that Denver Bay would not win the race.

Johnson wanted the horse to run and be beaten.

The detective did not know exactly what the Brower crowd did want.

He went over to the stables in company with Morris to find out.

The dude and the roughly-dressed horseman attracted some attention as they walked into the quiet little barroom.

The men outside seemed to regard it as a good joke that Morris had picked up such a companion.

"He'll skin the dude all right enough," said one of them from a lazy position at the watering trough.

"You bet he will," added another. "If the dude has any money left after Morris gets through boring with him he's in luck."

"If he has any money left," said another, "Morris will probably take him down and take it away from him."

"I dunno 'bout dat. Did you notice the dude's neck and shoulders?"

While the men outside were talking, Nick and his companion seated themselves in a small room opening from the barroom.

Nick ordered drinks and cigars liberally, and Morris was soon on the road to a high old time.

"Say, young feller," he said, lighting a cigar and turning away just long enough to permit Nick to empty his fourth glass of whisky into a spittoon, "you knocked them fellows around pretty lively over there."

"I was dooced scared, doncher know."

"Well you acted to me just like a man who enjoyed it."

"I weally didn't know when I hit them. Dooced lucky, wasn't I?"

"Twasn't all luck, I guess," said Morris, eyeing the dude suspiciously.

"Oh, come now. You mustn't talk that way to a fellah."

"Hello, there," shouted one of the loafers from the outside, pushing the door open with his foot, "be you fellers goin' on de retired list?"

"We're busy just now," said Morris angrily.

"All right," said the other, with a loud guffaw, "work de dude fer all dere is in it."

Morris started excitedly to his feet.

"What do you want here anyhow?" he demanded.

"No offense," said the other, with a

about the news over town."

"It's too early for news over town. There isn't much going on there till afternoon. You mean about the races, of course?"

"I'd like to know how to win a couple of hundred."

"You won't find out from me if you stand there all day."

"Well, so long," said the other, closing the door with a bang. "I didn't know but what de dude might stand treat," he added, sneaking back to his companion.

"Aw," said Nick, as the fellow disappeared. "Just touch the bell and we'll have something more to drink."

By this time Morris was considerably under the influence of liquor.

He swallowed his whisky sullenly, and looked at his companion after the wise manner of half-drunken men.

"You didn't get a bet yet," he said, with a hiccough.

"That's what I'm waiting for. You promised, you know."

"Tell you, pardner, I took you into that poolroom to do you out of a couple of hundred, and I'd a got forty fer doin' it."

"That's quite awful!" exclaimed Nick, throwing up his hands in astonishment.

"But I liked the way you bumped those toughies up there, and you have acted square in bringing me here, so that I'm goin' ter give you a tip."

"Really, now?"

"Yes; you're a man of your word, ain't you?"

"'Pon honah!"

"Well, then, I want you to promise me that you will give me half a century after you get your money."

"Really, now, isn't that too much?"

"You can make many amount you like, pard."

"I might lose, you know."

"Will you give me fifty if I get win?"

"Why, yes."

"Well, den, you bet on Daisy for de handicap to-morrow."

"But, my dear sir, what's the matter with Denver Bay?"

"De hoss ain't in it."

"But his name is on the cah'd, dear boy."

"I tell you," said the other, pounding his fist on the table in drunken impatience, "de hoss ain't in it!"

"But, my dear boy, I've got money bet on Denver Bay now."

"You'll get dat back."

"I don't see how."

"If de hoss don't start all de bets will be declared off, won't dey?"

Nick sat for some moments in silence.

"Here are the two schemes," he thought. "Johnson wants the horse to run and be beaten, and Brower does not want the beast to start."

"Wa't do you say?"

Nick was thinking fast, and did not answer for some time.

"I'm responsible for the Brower end of the scheme," he thought. "The fellow doesn't dare to risk his ten thousand dollars."

The detective smiled as he thought how little confidence crooks of sporting men have in each other's word.

"In this case," he thought, "it may be that Brower denies Johnson's desire to fix the horse. He's afraid of some failure in the plan at the last moment."

The detective now had two plans to select from.

He could defeat the Johnson and Brower plots, and see that the race would be a square one, or he could allow Brower to have his way, and thus cause all bets to be declared off.

The first plan, if the horse should win, would place his client in an excellent position.

On the other hand, if the horse should

lose after all it would only increase his difficulty.

The second plan would release Wheeler's twenty thousand dollar stake money, and leave him just as he stood before engaging in the enterprise.

This plan of preventing the horse from entering the race had been more than hinted at when Chick had appeared at the stables as a jockey on the previous night.

His report on the matter that morning had caused Nick to talk as he had at the broker's office.

From that conversation with Wheeler, every word of which was still fresh in his mind, Nick had satisfied himself that the broker was anxious to let the stake remain if there was any prospect of securing a fair race.

This was one point in favor of the project of balking the rascals in their efforts to keep the horse out.

Another strong point in the mind of the detective was to teach Johnson and his gang of criminal pool sellers a salutary lesson.

"What they aimed at in their dealings with Wheeler," he mused, "was robbery, pure and simple. They thought to take his twenty thousand dollars without even as much as giving him a show for it."

"Well," said Morris, at length, "how much are you going to put up on Daisy?"

"Weally, now, I'd be betting against myself, doncher see?"

"Didn't I tell you you'd get the money staked on Denver Bay back again?"

"Why don't Denver Bay run?"

"Now, look here, if you're goin' 'round tellin' that Denver Bay isn't goin' ter start you won't be doin' yerself enny good, and will get me into trouble. You don't want to do that, I suppose?"

"My deah boy, of course I wouldn't cause you any trouble."

"If you do," began Morris, pounding his fist upon the table, "I'll——"

Just then the scene in the poolroom came to his mind, and glancing at the muscular form of the pretended dude he finished the sentence in a different way from that at first intended.

"I'll lose my place."

"Deah boy," said the dude, who appeared to be struggling with a very deep thought, "couldn't you make Denver Bay win the race?"

"Denver Bay," said Morris, solemnly, "is by long odds the best horse entered for the race. He could win de purse wid half a show."

"Weally now?"

"It's de surest thing in the world."

"Then," said the dude, rising to his feet, "I'll go and book some more money on him."

"You're a chump if you do."

"But I weally must, you know."

Morris had as yet given no intimation as to what means would be resorted to to keep the horse off the track.

This was a point upon which the detective desired further information. For this reason he continued the talk about the horse still being a possibility.

"But, deah boy, the ownah tells me that the horse will be run, and will do his best."

"Damn the owner! He's de biggest sucker in de whole deal."

"But, chappie, he's a friend of mine."

"Well, it's a purty pair you are, then, that's all I've got to say."

Nick rose to his feet as if about to leave the room.

"Hold on! Are you goin' out to bet more money on Denver Bay?"

"Aw—aw—I thought I would."

"Well, it won't do you no good. The money will only lay in de poolroom till after de race, and den you'll get it back."

"Has the horse got hurt, deah boy?"

"He's liable to get hurt before tomorrow morning."

"Quite shocking!" said the dude, innocently. "The ownah ought to know it."

"Damn the owner. If he wants to set around here and let his horse be used up right before his eyes let him do it. It's no affair of mine or yours."

"The secret is out," thought Nick. "The brutes intend to steal into the stable to-night and cripple the beast in some way."

"Come, young fellow," said Morris, "I've talked myself dry again. Fill up de glasses once more, and we'll get out."

Nick gave the required order, and the fellow took down his whisky without seeing that Nick threw the contents of his glass upon the floor.

"Now, mind what I've told you," said Morris, as they stood in the doorway, "and don't give me away. I shouldn't have said anything about it if it hadn't been for the whisky you throwed into me."

"'Pon me honah! I'll not mention it to a living soul."

As the two passed into the bar-room the sound of excited voices came from the street in front of the house.

Nick was now anxious to get away, but he paused for a moment and listened as the sounds became louder.

In a moment a small boy, clad in the costume of a jockey, dashed in at the front door, and dodged behind tables and chairs in his efforts to keep out of the reach of a red-faced fellow, who, riding whip in hand, was pursuing him.

The boy succeeded in eluding his pursuer for some moments, much to the delight of the bystanders.

At length the little fellow, in leaping backward, stumbled over a chair and fell to the floor.

Before he could rise to his feet the man had hold of his collar, and was brandishing his whip high in air.

"I'll teach you to play your pranks on me," he shouted, bringing the whip down upon the boy's shrinking form.

The crowd seemed to enjoy the scene hugely, but it was not in the nature of Nick Carter to stand by and see the boy cruelly beaten.

He was about to interfere when the boy succeeded in releasing himself from the man's hold, and sprang sobbing behind the detective for protection.

The brute made another dash at him, but the detective's sturdy frame barred the way.

"My deah fellah," he said, "don't hurt the boy. What has he done?"

"He's done enough, you confounded dude. Stand out of the way!"

"If you touch the boy again," drawled Nick, "I shall strike you."

The man raised the whip as though about to give the detective a lash in the face.

The crowd laughed and cheered, and made the most of the rather humorous situation.

The next moment their smiles changed to looks of astonishment.

With a quick movement, the seeming dude secured possession of the whip.

He then passed one arm half around the fellow's head and neck, and gave him a sudden whirl that sent him spinning about the room like a top.

As he spun around the detective applied the whip with no gentle hand, and fairly whirled and lashed the fellow out of the room.

"Hurrah for de dude!" yelled a chorus of voices, as the defeated man stood outside, swearing and shaking his fists.

"I thought dere'd be some fun w'en de duffer raised his whip on de dude," said Morris. "You oughtef seen him clean out a couple of plug-uglies in de poo! room to-day."

Nick paid no attention to the remarks that were being made about him, but devoted his whole attention to the boy.

"Where do you work?" he asked, hurriedly.

"Over dere in de stables."

"What horses are there in the stables?"

"Oh, Daisy, an' Denver Bay, an' a whole lot of 'em."

"Can you get away about dark?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, show yourself in the road there just below the house about dusk, and I'll pick you up in a carriage. Will you come?"

"You bet I'll come. Dat man would 'a' killed me if it hadn't been for you."

"I'm making up now for last night's bad luck," thought Nick, as he turned around with an insipid stare and in a drawl asked the bystanders to join him in a drink.

As he turned away from the bar a moment later he noticed a well-dressed man entering the front door and hastening directly up stairs, as though desirous of remaining unnoticed.

The man was Brower, with whom Nick had, in the disguise of a business man, made the ten-thousand dollar bet the night before.

CHAPTER VI.

NICK CARTER—A DEPUTY SHERIFF.

About two o'clock in the afternoon of the same day the sheriff was somewhat surprised at seeing a dudish-looking fellow walking into his private office unannounced.

He glanced up impatiently from his writing, but immediately resumed his work.

"Transact your business in the outer office, please," he said.

"Aw," said the dude, gazing stupidly through his one eye-glass, "are you the person in powah?"

"Transact your business in the outer office," repeated the sheriff, peremptorily. "Can't do it, me dear boy."

The sheriff threw himself angrily around in his revolving chair and faced the intruder.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

The dude closed the office door carefully and threw himself into a chair in front of the irate official.

"I have an idea," he said, in his natural tone of voice, "that there may be a racket at the racing stables to-night, and I want an understanding with your men."

"Who are you?"

"Nick Carter, at your service."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the sheriff, extending his hand, "you would deceive your own mother in that rig."

"All in the way of business," said Nick, with a smile.

"I begin to recognize you now, although it has been a long time since I have had the pleasure of putting eyes on you."

"I've been rather busy, and the fact of the matter is that I am rather crowded for time now. You have men at the track, I suppose?"

"Certainly. The police are supposed to keep order there, but we always have men on hand to look out for pickpockets and notorious criminals who are wanted here and in other places."

"Shall you have men at the stables to-night?"

"There are half a dozen there, I believe, who have been engaged to look after the safety of the horses."

"Will you be kind enough to give me a note to one of them?"

"Certainly, I'll drive over with you if you think it necessary."

"I think it would be better not. I'm handling a peculiar case in which I have constituted myself judge, jury, and executioner, and I think it will be better for me to go alone."

"As you choose. You know, Mr.

Carter, that you can command me in any way."

"Well, it may be necessary for me to make an arrest there to-night. If so, I want to have one of your men within reach so that I can place the prisoner into his hands at once."

"That's easily accomplished. I will write you a note which will place all the deputies in that vicinity directly under your charge."

"After the arrest—if one is made—I want the prisoner hustled away and lodged in jail without any fuss being made over it."

"In other words, you don't want the people around there to know that an arrest has been made."

"That's it exactly."

The sheriff wrote busily for some moments, and then handed the detective a slip of paper, which he had placed into an unsealed envelope.

"There you are," he said. "Show that to any man you see wearing my badge and your orders will be promptly obeyed."

Thanking the sheriff for his assistance, Nick hastened away.

At dusk that night a carriage drove slowly along in front of the road house.

A few yards from the front of the house a young boy in a jockey uniform was standing.

"Here you are, boy," called a voice from the carriage. "Jump in quick."

The boy sprang nimbly into the vehicle. As he took his seat he glanced hastily at the only other occupant, and started back in alarm.

"You're looking for the dude who saved you a thrashing this morning?"

"Yes, sir. Did he send you?"

"Yes," said Nick, nodding to the driver to proceed. "Are you employed at the stable where Denver Bay is kept?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I want to sleep there to-night."

The boy glanced keenly at the coarse and ill-fitting garments of the pretended countryman who sat on the seat beside him, and asked:

"Ain't you got no other place to stay?"

"Never mind that. I have taken a notion to sleep in the stable to-night."

"You don't mean no harm?"

"Not a bit, my boy."

"Well, I guess I can slide you in, but there'd be an awful racket if they should find out."

"I'll take all the chances on the racket."

"Be you the duffer what give the man a whippin' this mornin'?"

"Do I look like him?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, I'm the same man, and if I did you a favor to-day you must do me one to-night."

"Ain't I goin' to let you into the stables?"

"You must do more than that."

"What is it?"

"You must never say a word about my being in there—never speak or hint of it to a living soul."

"You bet I won't if you don't want me to."

"Does any one watch the stables at night?"

"Oh, dere's folks around dere, but dey don't watch very close."

"Is any one supposed to sleep anywhere near Denver Bay?"

"No, sir—not very near."

"What time can you let me in?"

"You come to the big doors about ten o'clock. Den if any one sees you, dey'll think you're one of de men working around there."

"That's just the thing. When I get in point out Denver Bay's stall, and go away as if nothing had happened."

"Is de Bay goin' to win de race to-morrow?"

"I hope so."

"I hope so, too. He's a dandy horse."

After some further conversation the detective let the boy out of the carriage, and a few moments later left it himself.

The night was quite dark, and the lights still burning about the stables had very little effect at ten o'clock, when the detective made his appearance at the place indicated by the boy.

The jockey was in waiting for him, and soon had him snugly stowed away under Denver Bay's manger.

The horse did not seem to relish this invasion of his private domain to any great extent, but save a few snorts and an emphatic stamp or two, he paid little attention to his unbidden guest.

There were sounds of voices about the place for some time after the detective had secured his position, but just before midnight all grew still.

Now and then a steady footstep sounded in the distance, but in the immediate vicinity all was quiet.

"Now I wonder," thought Nick, "if that sheriff's officer is attending strictly to business. He seems to be an intelligent and nervy sort of chap, and I guess I can trust him."

After what seemed hours to the waiting detective, he heard an inner door opened cautiously and the footfalls of two persons were heard stealthily advancing toward the place where he lay concealed.

"That's the horse over there," said a voice which he had no difficulty in recognizing as that of Morris.

"You take the iron and do the work," said Brower, in a whisper.

"Not much. I'm not laming race horses for a living just now."

"You've done worse than that before now."

"Well, everything I ever tackled had some sort of a show."

"Will you obey my orders?"

"I will not."

"Then I'll do it myself. You stand here and watch."

"Now, then," thought Nick, "I wonder if that deputy sheriff is near the door."

Just then the low yelp of a dog sounded from the outside.

"That's he!" he thought.

"Hark!" whispered Brower, "what was that noise?"

"Some dog hunting for a bone or a place to sleep, I suppose."

"Hunting us, probably."

"You're a coward."

"The fact is, I don't like this sort of thing."

"Then leave it."

"And leave my ten-thousand dollar stake against a thousand? Not much."

"You were a fool to make that bet."

"I know that as well as you do, but I was crowded into it."

"You're better at lifting money from a Wall Street office than at anything else, I guess."

"Hush! you had your share of the money, didn't you?"

"Yes, I had it until you got me into a poker game."

"Well, I presume the broker has made twenty thousand since that time. So it don't matter."

"This is no place to talk over such things. Do your work, and let's get out of here."

"I hope the Bay will kick his head off," thought Nick, as the man approached the head of the stall.

"Now, gentlemen," spoke a voice from out the darkness, "I have the drop on you, and if you make a move until I say the word I'll blow your brains out."

Nick spoke the last word in a loud tone of voice, and in response to the signal the door swung open and a bright light flashed into the place.

Behind the light was an officer's badge, and at the right of the badge was a steady arm carrying a cocked revolver.

Before the two culprits could recover from their astonishment or lift a hand, the cool voice in the darkness continued:

"You see how it is, gentlemen, two men have the drop on you, so you may as well give in."

"Hold steady there, Mr. Officer, while I slip on the bracelets."

Almost before the men could realize their true position, they were handcuffed and helpless.

"It's just this way," said Nick, still keeping in the shadow, "nothing is to be said about your attempt to lame Denver Bay."

"What are we arrested for, then?" gasped Brower.

"For the larceny of twenty thousand dollars from James Wheeler's office in Wall Street not long ago."

"Where is your proof?"

"Never mind the proof now. There is a carriage waiting outside. If you make any noise here, or in the future give any intimation of the place of your arrest, it will only damage your case with the court."

They offered no further remonstrance, and were soon in a carriage on their way to the county jail in charge of two deputy sheriffs.

A few men lounging about the place saw the men enter the carriage, but no one suspected that the elegantly attired gentleman and the rough-looking hostler were handcuffed together.

As Nick stood watching the carriage when it was driven off he felt a soft pull at his coat.

"My!" said the voice of a jockey, "wasn't that a slick job?"

"You little scamp!" said Nick, with a smile, "did you see that?"

"You bet I did. Don't you s'pose I wanted to know what you was stayin' in dere for?"

"Suppose I had stayed there all night?"

"Den I wouldn't have got no sleep."

"Suppose I had hurt the horse?"

"Then I'd have clawed your eyes out."

"You think a good deal of that horse, don't you?"

"Course I does."

"Then you stick close to him to-morrow."

"You bet I will. I'm goin' to ride him."

"Well, if you see a new hostler hanging around him on the track, you ask him if he doesn't think he's a dude. If he says he was a dude yesterday you go on about your business and let him alone. Understand?"

"All right. Guess I know who de new man'll be."

"Well, don't you open your mouth about what has taken place here to-night, and keep equally still about to-morrow's work."

The boy nodded and turned away.

"And now," thought Nick, as he walked toward the hotel, "I've got the biggest scheme of all to face in the morning."

CHAPTER VII.

A FOOT RACE.

"There's something mysterious going on."

Martin was the speaker, and Amos was listening, all attention.

"Anything new?"

"Why, there's rumors around the stables of strange happenings last night, but no one seems to know anything definite."

"In what way?"

"That's what I can't find out. People were seen to pass out late in the night and drive hurriedly away in a carriage."

"Nobody knows who they were?"

"The jockey who is to ride Denver Bay was seen talking to one of the strangers, but you can't get a word out of him."

"That's strange."

"It's more than strange—it's suspicious. But, after all, we have our own scheme to work, and I have every confidence in that."

"You have the medicine?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'd better give it to me now. There is no knowing when we will be together again."

Martin took a small box from his pocket, opened it, and exhibited a white, sugar-coated pill about the size of a marble.

"You can't be too careful with this," he said. "I had work enough getting it."

"Is it poisonous?"

"No. It's a compound known only to one or two people, and they charge mighty high for it. That little pill cost me a hundred round dollars."

"It'll make the horse stop, bolt and kick, will it?"

"It certainly will. I didn't go into this thing without seeing it tried."

"And the horse'll be all right in five minutes, eh?"

"Yes, the pain will subside in less time than that. The beast will be a trifle weak for a while, but no one will notice that."

"Isn't there some danger of killing the jockey?"

"Let the jockey take care of himself."

As the two men arose from the table at which they had been sitting, in a room at the hotel which the detective had visited on the previous day, Martin stopped a moment with his hand on the door and listened.

"What's that noise?" he asked, in a startled tone.

"What noise?"

"What is that bumping sound? I've heard it several times lately."

"I heard it, too," said Amos, with a frown, "and listened. It's some one bumping against the wall in the next room."

"Well, here we part for the present," said Martin. "You do your work and I'll do mine. You are sure you can get the pill in the hoarse's mouth unobserved? It must be done on the track at the last moment."

"That's easy enough. The last thing I do is to sponge his mouth."

"Well, don't make any mistake. There has been an impression that Denver Bay is sure to win, and the pool boxes are just loaded down with bets."

Thus talking, the men passed out of the room, closing and locking the door behind them. No sooner had they disappeared than there was a sudden upheaval of a long couch in one corner of the room, and Nick Carter crept from underneath it.

"Whew!" he said, drawing a long breath and wiping the perspiration from his face, "I think I should have died in there in five minutes more."

The celebrated detective had, as a matter of fact, been concealed in the narrow space between the sofa bottom and the floor for four long hours.

Early in the day he had heard Martin engage the room, and give explicit orders that no one should be allowed to occupy it during the day.

Not long after, he had heard him make an appointment with Amos at that place.

By the use of his picklock Nick had entered the room and concealed himself.

He was already aware of Martin's plans as they had stood two days before, but he thought that a change might have been made since the details were arranged in the poolroom stall, and wanted to make sure of his ground.

"They stick to their original plan," he thought, "and I've had this long watch for nothing; but, after all, I was not in a position to take chances."

He wore the dress and had the appear-

ance of the ordinary employee of the racing stable.

He had procured badges admitting him to all parts of the grounds, the track, and the judges' stand as well, and the little jockey had provided him with a ribbon bearing the name of Denver Bay.

This would enable him to work around the horse after he appeared upon the track.

"I imagine," thought the detective, as he listened with his ear at the door, "that there'll be a performance on the track to-day not down on their bills. If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Johnson will go home to-night sixty thousand dollars poorer than he thinks he will."

The hall outside the door appeared to be deserted, and the detective pressed back the bolt, and passed out, closing the door softly after him.

The coast was clear, and he lost no time in getting outside and mingling with the crowd.

As he stepped along the walk, he felt a touch upon his arm, and turned to find Chick standing before him, still in the disguise of a jockey.

The two walked along together until they reached a secluded place, and then Nick asked:

"Did you see the sheriff?"

"Yes. Everything is all right at the jail. Brower and Morris are locked up in separate cells, and no one is the wiser for their being there."

"Have they done any talking or sent out for friends?"

"They talk most of the time, threatening all sorts of things, and Brower has been trying all the morning to send a messenger over town to call that ten thousand dollar bet off."

"The sheriff didn't allow him to send out any word, did he?"

"Of course he didn't. He understands as well as we do that that is Wheeler's game."

"You gave the sheriff my note, of course?"

"Yes, and he had a great laugh over it."

"He couldn't imagine yesterday what I wanted his men for. I suppose he knows now."

"Then you didn't tell him?"

"No, I didn't tell him. I got what I wanted without doing that.

"Now," said Nick, "I want you on the track this afternoon when the handicap starts, and as close to Denver Bay as you can get without attracting attention."

"Is there liable to be a scrap?"

"It strikes me that I have been in about enough scraps in this case."

After some further conversation the detective and his assistant parted, and the former walked slowly back to the hotel.

Amos was nowhere in sight when he reached the crowd hanging about the place.

Five minutes later Nick stood in front of the counter of a small drug store a short distance from the track.

The clerk in charge came out from behind the prescription screen to wait upon him.

"I want a sugar pill," said Nick, with a smile.

The clerk reached out his hand and took down a jar of homeopathic pellets.

"Hold on," said Nick, "those are too small. Besides, they are medicated, are they not?"

"Nothing but pure sugar," said the clerk, putting a few into his mouth and chewing them with evident relish.

"That ain't what I want," said Nick, stepping around to the show case where a line of marbles and toys were displayed. "I want just one about the size of one of those marbles. It must be perfectly round and smooth and hard. Can you supply one?"

"I certainly can."

"Well, do so at once."

The clerk retired behind the screen, and in a few minutes came out and stood behind the counter facing the detective.

"I've got it made just as you ordered, but it will take a few moments to dry."

"It will be hard, will it?"

"As hard as a rock."

Nick purchased some cigars, and sat down by the window to smoke.

As he did so, Amos passed along on the opposite side of the street and entered a small livery stable.

"What sort of place is that over there?" Nick asked.

"Rather a tough joint, I should say. They have very little business when there are no races on."

Nick removed the badge indicating that he was a follower of Denver Bay, and pinned the steel badge of a deputy sheriff upon his vest.

"Here's your pill. It's big enough to sweeten a cup of coffee with."

"I'll sweeten more than that with it," said Nick, as he took it, paid the bill, and hastened off to the livery stable.

Amos sat on a bench near the driveway, conversing with several attaches of the place.

"Here comes a new deputy," said one of the loungers, as Nick stepped up. "You haven't been on the force long, have you, partner?"

"Just got on this morning."

"I thought I hadn't seen you around before."

"As I was saying," broke in Amos, evidently continuing a conversation, "the fellow is the best jumper I ever saw. I don't know how far his jump was, but it must have been a clean twelve feet."

"Speaking about jumping," said Nick, "I can do a little of that myself."

Nick, in his present disguise was rather a green-looking specimen, and the loafers scented some fun at once.

"How far can you jump?" asked one.

"I don't know."

"Let's go back in the barn and try," suggested another.

Nick walked back into the barn without saying another word, and took off his coat and vest.

"That's purty good," said Amos, as Nick sprang lightly out, making only a fair jump, "but I can beat it."

"I'll bet you five dollars you can't."

As Amos started to take off his coat and vest, Nick picked up his own.

When Amos threw his garments down Nick threw his own on top of them.

The money was staked, and Amos won easily.

"That's hard luck," said Nick. "Can you run as well as you can jump?"

"I can do some running," said one of the men.

"I want to get my money back on this jumper," said Nick, throwing himself down on the pile of clothes. "I'll bet five dollars that he can beat any man in the party for a block."

"I can't do it," said Amos, "but I'll try it if you make the bet."

He winked at the others as he spoke.

They had found a sucker, and they would divide the money, Amos, of course, losing.

The loafers all rushed to the door as the two rushed down the street, and Nick followed with a coat and a vest in his hand.

He remained behind the rest, however, and seemed to have some particular business with the pocket of the vest he held in his hand.

"You're beat," said one, as the runners reached the corner.

"I guess I ain't no good," said Nick, as Amos came back.

"Hello, there," said Amos, all out of breath, "you're trying to put on my vest."

"That's so," said Nick, with a wink. "It looks a little newer than mine."

Amos put on the garment, threw on his coat, and hastened to the rear end of the barn, where Nick plainly saw him fumbling with a box which he had taken from the vest pocket.

"You'll find a pill there, all right enough," thought Nick, as he walked away, "but not one calculated to make a horse lose a race. In the meantime," he added, rolling a hard, round substance in his pocket, "I'll keep this and have it analyzed."

CHAPTER VIII.

A SURPRISE.

The race track is all excitement.

People fight their way through the crowd to the bookmakers, and deposit their money, many of them placing it on Denver Bay.

Finally the rakes and brooms are called from the track.

The crowd rushes up the stairways, and the next moment a splendid bay horse comes around the head of the stretch.

"Denver Bay! Denver Bay!" is the cry.

Close behind him come other favorites.

They go down the paddock, followed in a straggling way by the rest of the field.

The jockeys and helpers crowd about their mounts, and excitement is everywhere.

"Hello," shouts Denver Bay's jockey, as a man, wearing the horse's colors, moves up to him. "Don't you think you are a dude?"

"I was a dude yesterday," is the sullen reply.

"No monkeying there," shouts Amos, walking up to the horse with a sponge in his hand. "They are about ready."

The detective watches the man closely, and smiles as he sees something white glistening in his palm.

There is a flash of colors and a gleam of steel down in the paddock, as the jockeys mount their horses, and the entire field moves out to the track.

Denver Bay leads.

He minces along with a knowing air, as though thoroughly realizing his importance.

The rest of the field follows in single file, their glossy hides shining in the sun like satin.

The horses take their places in a long, irregular line.

Clouds of dust follow several false breaks and hang over the starting point.

The signal comes, and down the stretch of track come the bright shirts of the jockeys.

Denver Bay gives a sudden plunge or two, jumps off something like two lengths, and goes sailing away in the lead.

There is a grand shout of voices and a shuffling of nervous feet, and shrill cries of "Denver Bay! Denver Bay!"

They sweep past the stand, past the long rows of excited faces, around the turn and away.

Then there is silence for a moment, but only for a moment.

"Daisy falls back!" shouts one, swinging his field glass aloft.

"Denver Bay leads!" shouts another, amid the wildest cheers.

Nick Carter stands close by the side of Amos as the horses turn into the home-stretch.

The detective sees that the man's face is as pale as death, and that his hands are trembling.

"You beat me on the jumping match," said Nick, turning to the excited man, "but I'll bet you an even ten that Denver Bay wins the race."

Amos makes no reply.

He pushes his way hither and yon in the crowd, muttering incoherently to himself.

"It must be time," Nick hears him say, as the thunder of hoofs grows louder. "If it don't happen, they'll all blame me."

With straining muscles and glaring eyes, the horses pound up the track, Denver Bay still in the lead.

"This is ruin!" gasps Amos, now utterly regardless of the people about him.

The horses are only a few rods away.

Then Nick sees the excited man grasped by the throat, and realizes that Martin, desperate and unable to control his passion, is fighting with his tool, as dogs fight in the gutter.

The horses thunder past, and Denver Bay wins by a good length.

The great handicap race is over and Denver Bay is officially declared the winner.

As the crowd surges around the winning horse and the jockey is being weighed, there is a cry from the grand stand that some one has fainted.

Nick sees that the excitement is about the spot the Wall Street broker selected as his seat, and hastens in that direction.

As he reaches the place Wheeler slowly opens his eyes and reaches out his hand.

"Not a word here," whispers the detective, as he bends over him. "Are you able to walk?"

"I think so. You see, it rather knocked me out."

"Well, get a carriage here and drive away."

Nick places the broker in a carriage, and then turns back toward the track.

"You did nobly," he says to the jockey, a moment later. "Keep what took place last night to yourself, and come to this address to-morrow forenoon."

The detective hands the boy the broker's card and hastens away.

"Now, then," he says to the broker, as they drive slowly along, "I want to tell you, now that it is all over, that I don't like these kind of cases."

"But you have saved my reputation, and have saved the property of two innocent children. Besides this, you have defeated one of the wickedest conspiracies ever put on the turf."

"Yes, but I don't like it for all that. I don't like the idea of mixing up in these affairs of the turf. My business is to assist the officers of the law in bringing criminals to justice.

"If the note you sent me this morning is correct you have also done this."

"How is that?"

"In defeating the race-track gamblers you have captured the men who robbed me of twenty thousand dollars."

"That is all, that makes me feel in any way easy about my part in the transaction."

"You have even recovered ten thousand dollars of the stolen money."

"Yes, but that part of it was all involuntary—I did not set out to catch the thieves or to recover the stolen money."

"You did both, though," said Wheeler, heartily, "and I am seventy thousand dollars ahead by reason of your good work. For without your assistance I should have lost the twenty thousand stolen money, and would never have recovered the ten thousand."

"You should have faced the loss of the twenty thousand dollars like a man, and not resorted to the race track to get even. Don't come to me if you ever get into another scrape of the same sort. You remember the promise you made me when I entered upon the case?"

"What was it?"

"You promised that if I would assist you in saving your money that you would invest the money belonging to these heirs in some safe and secure manner, where it would be beyond your reach."

"And you may rest assured that I will do all that and more. They shall have all the money I have won by the use of their money."

"There is one thing more. I want you to give the little jockey a thousand dollars when he comes to your office to-morrow. I leave my compensation entirely to yourself."

"It shall be ten thousand dollars, if it is a cent. Come around in the morning and get the check."

"You'd better collect in all your bets this afternoon," said Nick, as the two men parted, "for the pool rooms have been hit hard. I won a few hundred myself; not because I wanted to win the money, but because I found myself in places where I had to bet. I have a private charity fund, however, which will care for that."

Wheeler collected his money without any difficulty, and Nick Carter received his very liberal fee next day.

The little jockey nearly went wild when he was presented with a thousand dollars.

Brower and Morris were convicted of grand larceny, and sentenced to long terms.

And now, when the celebrated detective feels particulary pleasant, he explains to his companions how, for once in his life, he became a "dead-game" sport, saved the patrimony of two innocent children, and won the famous handicap.

[THE END.]

The next number of the New Nick Carter Weekly will contain "Trips in the Dark; or, A Long Road That Has No Turning."

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